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SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR J.ROSHOLT, K.WILLIAMS; WHA/PPC M.BORDERS, INR/IAA  
R.CARHART  
YUMA FOR COL BULLINGTON, J.WYMER, L.VANDERZYL  
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD L.AMSELEM AND S.WETZEL  
BRASILIA FOR DATT COL B.BUTCHER

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL MARR MASS PGOV NS

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT OF SURINAME DIPLOMATIC NOTE GRANTING APPROVAL  
OF USAYPG STRYKER TEST

NOTE: THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST - SEE PARAGRAPH 5.

¶1. (U) Below is the text of the official Government of Suriname  
Diplomatic Note No. 12.938 / AB responding to USG requests for GOS  
approval test of the Stryker vehicle.

BEGIN TEXT:

No. 12.938 / AB

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname presents its compliments to the Embassy of the United States of America and has the honour to refer to the latter's note no. 77 dated May, 24, 2007 wherein it is stated in the second paragraph that, "the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (USAYPG), an agency of the U.S. Army, seeks approval from the Government of Suriname for the establishment of a Tropical Test Center in the Moengo area of the District of Marowijne to conduct tests on equipment that the U.S. military currently has in its inventory or is considering for purchase."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has further the honour to refer to the Embassy's note no. 174, wherein it is stated in the second paragraph that, "With respect to the foregoing, the Embassy of the United States respectfully requests that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs advise whether the Government of the Republic of Suriname has reached a decision whether to approve the proposal of the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground."

With respect to the foregoing, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname hereby would like to inform the esteemed Embassy that the Government of Suriname approves the proposal for the test of a single "Stryker" eight-wheeled armored troop transport vehicle in the Moengo area in the District of Marowijne.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs further informs the esteemed Embassy that the Government of the Republic of Suriname appoints the Ministry of Defense of Suriname as the overall coordinator for this subject matter and likes to point out that any test of any other (piece of) equipment than the single "Stryker" referred to before, will need to be individually submitted as a request for approval by the Government of the Republic of Suriname.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Embassy of the United

States the assurances of its highest considerations.

To: the Embassy of the Paramaribo, November 28, 2007  
United States of America Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Paramaribo Republic of Suriname  
(seal of the Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs)

END TEXT

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PRESS COVERAGE OF YUMA DISCUSSION IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
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12. (U) On January 8, during the GOS's budget presentations to the national assembly, the Minister of Defense Ivan Fernald was questioned extensively about Yuma's Stryker test proposal. Press coverage of the session focused on the concerns of assembly members, including fears over perceived U.S. military encroachment and (unsubstantiated) rumors of U.S. intentions to establish a military base in Suriname. Fernald's defense included speculation on benefits to Suriname resulting from this and further tests. Assembly members interpreted this as "expansion" of the project. Coalition faction leader Otmar Rodgers requested a meeting of the parliament behind closed doors. He said Fernald's statements reminded him of Panama, and continued, "we have learned many lessons from American movements in South America where there was talk of 'peaceful penetration.'" August Bado, a representative from the Moengo area, asked for more information and said he wanted to know how the local community will benefit. Ruth Wijdenbosch, head of the subcommittee on armed forces, said that she hopes the Government will provide more information, as Fernald's presentation was "insufficient." President Ronald Venetiaan also expressed surprise at the "expansion" implied by Fernald's comments, noting that French and

Brazilian authorities had already expressed some concerns. However, the President assured assembly members that, as far as he knows, the Yuma proposal involves only one test.

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MOD ANALYSIS  
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13. (SBU) On January 9, DCM Genton contacted Ministry of Defense Permanent Secretary Dennis Kamperveen, who had been present at the January 8 session of the national assembly, to seek some clarification on what had been said. Kamperveen admitted that some parliamentarians had raised concerns during the Minister's presentation, but following the President's intervention, "everything was clear." By "clear" he meant that the GOS had approved only the testing of the Stryker, and any further testing would require another request from the USG. According to Kamperveen, the President also asserted that, "If there were problems, I never would have done it" (i.e., approved the test). Kamperveen concluded by noting that the GOS awaits the USG reaction to the GOS diplomatic note.

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SURALCO  
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14. (SBU) During an unrelated telcon in mid-December between DCM Genton and Warren Pedersen, the managing director of SURALCO (the U.S. company which operates mining concessions on the proposed test sites), Pedersen said that he was unaware of the details of the proposed Yuma testing, as he has never received any formal communication regarding the proposal. He noted that SURALCO would require formal notification from the GOS authorizing the Stryker (or any other) test on the SURALCO concessions. He added that SURALCO lawyers would need to have an opportunity to discuss and clarify liability issues (with USAYPG and the GOS) regarding USAYPG's use of test sites on the SURALCO concessions.

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ACTION REQUESTED  
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15. (U) In light of the GOS's formal approval of the single "Stryker" test, Post and the GOS request formal, cabled notification from USAYPG of a proposed timetable and detailed implementation plan for execution of the Stryker test in Suriname to enable Post to

respond to GOS Diplomatic Note No. 12.938 / AB.

SCHREIBER HUGHES